

>> Goble funded the \$500 office visit for each participant and paid travel expenses in exchange for half the pills that the group obtained. Goble kept a small amount of the pills for personal consumption and sold the rest for a 300 percent profit.

These out-of-state pill-seeking caravans led authorities to identify people like Goble as sponsors. According to Hunter, Goble had first sponsored trips to Urgent Care in Louisiana after hearing about it from Meade, the Floyd County truck driver.

"I talked with other detectives I knew all over and none had heard of anyone sponsoring trips for pills," Hunter said. "It was the first we had encountered."

People from Goble's group started sponsoring other drug seekers to travel to Philadelphia and people from that group did the same. Some of the new sponsors began visiting Urgent Care in Cincinnati and received the same prescription that was offered in Philadelphia. This cycle exacerbated the prescription drug epidemic in eastern Kentucky.

"This created a pool of prescription drug addicts," Hunter said.

According to Hunter, moderate drug users became addicts by traveling in sponsored groups and taking pills. Once addict-

Kidd looked at the seized medical files and found that 180 of the 200 patients were from Kentucky.

"I was surprised at how thin the medical files were for each patient," Kidd said. "There were really no test results or any documents for the patient other than subjective complaints about pain and the prescriptions."

Hunter and Kidd talked with the Philadelphia doctor, Randy Weiss, who authored these unlawful prescriptions. Weiss informed them he was being paid \$3,000 a week and an additional \$1,000 if he brought in \$10,000 in revenue. Stanley Naramore, the doctor at Urgent Care in Cincinnati, was operating under the same terms. The two clinics grossed \$1.2 million in cash over a 26-month span.

When questioned about their unlawful prescriptions, the two doctors shifted the blame to a man who they said was pulling the strings, clinic owner Michael Leman.

"They said they received pressure from Leman to continue these prescribing practices because if they didn't, they would be fired," Hunter said.

The doctors weren't the only ones pressured by Leman. In 2005, Leman instructed an office manager and an Urgent Care

West also noted that Leman specifically hired doctors he knew he could control. Leman employed three doctors to work at the clinics that were unemployed at the time of the hire, had criminal histories, and at one time had lost their license to practice medicine in other states. Weiss admitted he was a drug addict and the state of Kansas revoked Naramore's license after he was convicted of murder (the conviction was overturned on appeal).

"No one else would employ these doctors," West said. "They (the doctors) knew they couldn't find work anywhere else so they turned a blind eye."

Hunter, Kidd and West investigated and prosecuted all the major drug traffickers who visited these clinics. Weiss and Naramore pleaded guilty to criminal charges and were sentenced to four years each in prison. Other clinic employees, including Urgent Care's CEO, were convicted as well.

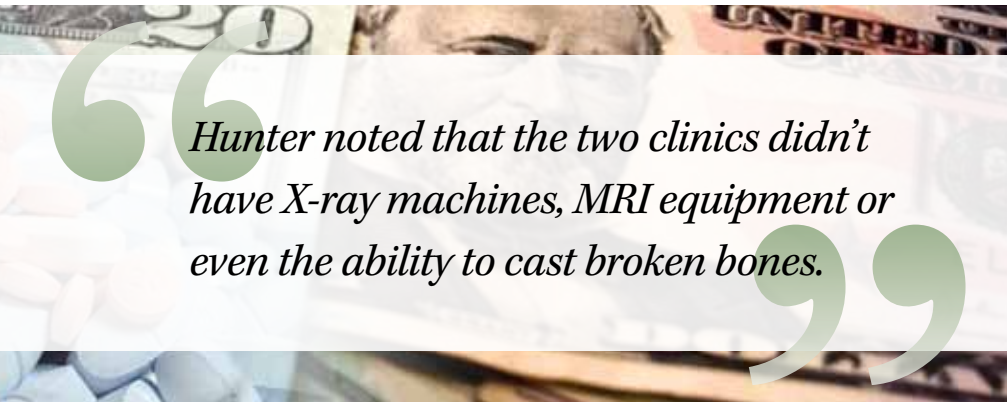
After more than five years of investigation, hundreds of interviews and numerous federal convictions, the U.S. Attorney's Office had enough evidence to seek a federal indictment against Leman in the summer of 2010. A federal grand jury later indicted two pain clinics corporations Leman controlled, Urgent Care Services Cincinnati, Inc. and Urgent Care Services Philadelphia, Inc.

In March of this year, after a four-week trial, a federal jury in Lexington convicted Leman and his two clinics of conspiracy to unlawfully distribute methadone and conspiracy to commit money laundering. It was Kentucky's first federal conviction of a pain clinic owner.

The conviction was far from a knock-out punch, but law enforcement landed a haymaker in its ongoing fight against this epidemic.

"I think it says a lot that law enforcement here was able to get a conviction of an out-of-state clinic owner who had never stepped foot in Kentucky," Kidd said.

"This was a monster case with a monster impact," West said. "It goes back to a commitment all of us made (Hunter, Kidd and West) when the problem started. We agreed we would spend whatever time and effort necessary until we got to the top." 🌱



Hunter noted that the two clinics didn't have X-ray machines, MRI equipment or even the ability to cast broken bones.

ed, and needing to make money to support their addiction, they sponsored drug-seekers of their own and the cycle continued.

"It was like a spider web that just kept getting bigger and bigger," West said.

Meanwhile, FBI and KSP, who were jointly investigating the case, obtained a search warrant for Urgent Care in Philadelphia.

"When we traveled up to Philadelphia, I think we figured this was some rogue doctor dispensing pills," Kidd said.

executive to recruit Kentucky patients so he could open a pain clinic in Philadelphia. Shortly after, Leman opened the Cincinnati clinic because it was a shorter drive for Kentucky patients.

Hunter noted that the two clinics didn't have X-ray machines, MRI equipment or even the ability to cast broken bones.

"A boy could fall down crossing the street in front of one of Leman's pain clinics and break his leg, and that clinic would not have the ability to treat him," West said.